

STRENGTHENING THE YOUTH SECTOR PROJECT

Strengthening the Youth Sector Inter-agency Group

Our inter-agency group provides leadership and coordination for the youth sector in greater Christchurch.

Our broad membership includes central and local government agencies, non-governmental organisations and philanthropic funders. We help to build capacity and identify gaps, overlaps and opportunities for efficiencies in the youth sector.

In the aftermath of the earthquakes, community groups, schools and other agencies that work with young people responded to the needs of young people in a number of innovative ways. While some of these responses were co-ordinated and collaboratively planned, in many cases responses emerged in an ad-hoc and organic way, developed by service providers responding to an identified local need, rather than from a sector wide strategic plan.

While this approach allowed for the innovation and flexibility required in a response phase, a number of organisations identified that a more planned approach would be needed as the city moved into recovery to ensure that the youth sector could meet its many challenges.

In September 2012, the Canterbury Youth Workers Collective, supported by the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority, the Wayne Francis Charitable Trust and the three local authorities gathered together members of the youth sector for a hui focused on strengthening the sector post-earthquake.

From discussions that day, it emerged that a collaborative approach was needed within the youth sector to:

- strengthen existing networks
- support young people to participate in the rebuild
- enhance the capacity and capability of the sector and advance the quality of existing services
- ensure funders and service providers collaboratively plan to make the most of opportunities presenting themselves in the current environment
- ensure services, programmes and activities meet the recovery needs of young people.

The Strengthening the Youth Sector Project Interagency Group was established in response - a collaborative attempt by partner agencies to formalise their activity and enhance the response to youth sector issues, both psychosocial and economic.

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We support and advise five work streams intended to build a stronger youth sector:

- **Youth Friendly Spaces and Places**

This is the newest work stream of the project, focused on designing a 'check card' and audit to help ensure public places and spaces are relevant for the young people of greater Christchurch.

- **Youth Charter**

At the hui it was strongly recommended that a Youth Charter be written to provide overarching youth development principles that any youth strategy would be aligned to and any organisation working or engaged with young people would agree to promote and work by. A draft charter was launched in September 2013.

- **Youth Participation**

In consultation with the Christchurch Youth Council, this group created Youth Voice Canterbury, an online network of youth councils and youth advisory groups from Canterbury which connects young people with the best people to answer their questions, consider their suggestions or make a change.

- **Youth Employment**

The Youth Employment Focus Group facilitated a December 2013 workshop inviting participants working within the youth employment spectrum. Those present were asked to reflect on what the key priorities should be to ensure the maximisation of employment opportunities for young people in Christchurch. These priorities are a key focus of the Youth Employment Focus Group.

- **Building the Capacity of the Youth Sector**

This group is responsible for distributing the Christchurch Earthquake Appeal Trust funding given to support the wellbeing of the sector's workforce.

<http://www.cywc.org.nz/sys-project.html>

